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U.S. Intelligence Reported Used In Israeli Raid

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JERUSALEM — Israel used intelligence gathered by the United States, among other sources, to reach the decision to attack Iraq's nuclear reactor, Israeli newspapers reported today.

"The determination that the Iraqi reactor could produce atom bombs and that it might be operational by the beginning of July was based on information from the United States," the independent Ha'aretz said in its lead story, adding that information also came from other sources.

The newspaper Ma'ariv said it learned of secret contacts in the United States and Israel in which the Americans agreed with the Israeli assessment that the Iraqis were nearing the point of producing a nuclear bomb.

"The meetings between the two countries held during the past year were meant for coordination and a mutual keeping track of the development of the nuclear reactor in Iraq," Ma'ariv said, without disclosing the source of its information.

During these meetings, the afternoon daily said, the Americans gave the Israelis secret information on the rate of Iraq's progress in building the reactor. The most recent such meeting was last fall, Ma'ariv said.

Prime Minister Menachem Begin, in a U.S. television appearance Sunday, alluded to a secret document the Israelis were given that outlined the state of Iraq's progress. He said previously the Israelis based their decision on "highly reliable" information.

Begin did not disclose whose document it was, but other sources indicated it was American.

With the world still stunned by Israel's lightning raid on Iraq, Begin warned Sunday the Syrian missiles in Lebanon could be Israel's next target.

Begin told an election campaign rally that when U.S. Envoy Philip Habib arrives in Israel later this week, he will ask the American, "Are you removing the missiles or not. If you're not removing them, then we will."

Army Radio quoted the prime minister as saying "Rafel" and "Yanush" — the nicknames of Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan and the command of the northern front, Gen. Aigdor Ben-Gal — "are ready" for action.

But the radio also said Begin told his audience there would not be a war with Syria over the missile issue. There was no elaboration.

Habib, who returned to the Middle East last week, is expected in Israel Wednesday. He is currently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

U.S. Envoy Philip C. Habib, meanwhile, his Mideast mediation mission battered by reaction to the raid, met with Saudi Arabia's foreign minister yesterday in the Saudi port city of Jidda. The Saudi diplomat said in a television interview that the raid had thrown "everything into turmoil."

Syria went further. It said Habib's effectiveness as a go-between in the Syrian-Israeli crisis over Syria's placement of anti-aircraft missiles in eastern Lebanon had ended.

"America is never to be treated as a fair referee," declared the Syrian government newspaper Tishrin. "America is depending heavily upon Israel to subjugate the Arab world."

The newspaper said the expected U.S. veto of sanctions against Israel in the U.N. Security Council would be "additional proof regarding America as fully siding with Israel." The council is to meet again today to consider Arab pleas that Israel be punished for the June 7 air raid that destroyed the Iraqi reactor near Baghdad. Israel said the facility would be used to produce atomic bombs.

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin expressed impatience yesterday with Habib's efforts to persuade Syria to remove the missiles.

Begin's press office quoted him as saying that when he meets with Habib later this week, he will ask him, "Are you moving the missiles or not? If you're not moving them, then we will." It said Begin made the statement in the coastal town of Natanya at a campaign rally for the June 30 elections.

Earlier, in an interview on "Face the Nation," Begin said he "wanted to know the results" of Habib's shuttle diplomacy that the American resumed last week.

He said he previously told Habib the effort "cannot go on for an indefinite period. We gave him all the time."

But Begin also said, "We don't want war with Syria and Syria is afraid of making war against us, therefore there won't be any war."

As Habib met with Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Arab world was still ringing with denunciations of the attack on the Osirak reactor.

King Hussein of Jordan declared, "The Arabs . . . will never surrender to Israeli terror."

Begin, in the CBS interview, said he had no regrets about the decision to strike at the reactor.

"We were absolutely sure that (President) Saddam Hussein, the tyrant of Iraq, had an ambition to develop an atomic bomb," he said.

Begin conceded, however, that he had erred in saying Hussein explicitly named Israel as the target of the bomb Iraq would build. The Israeli leader said the statement was carried in the Iraqi newspaper Al-Thawra, but it was not made by Hussein.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Saadoun Hammadi denied yesterday the facility was to be used to produce bombs targeted for Israel. He said the French-built reactor was designed "to get into the technology of the atomic energy."

Hammadi also said he believed "there is the possibility that the United States knew about" Israel's attack plans in advance. Interviewed on "Meet the Press," he said his conclusion was based on "deduction, not information."

U.S. officials have repeatedly denied such advance knowledge.

Interviewed on "Issues and Answers," the Saudi foreign minister said most Arabs believe the American denials. But he said the raid would still have a "tremendous impact" on Habib's peace efforts because the planes that bombed Iraq were American-made and Israel receives other aid from the United States.

The prince said Habib's peace efforts were starting to succeed, but the Israeli raid "puts everything into turmoil."

The American envoy and U.S. Ambassador Robert Neumann conferred with the prince, nephew of King Khaled, for one hour, the Saudi press agency reported. It gave no details.

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